

All Kinds of STRONG

by **Sharon Reiss Baker**
illustrated by **Kris Wiltse**



A Note from PJ Library®

Jewish Concepts

Al tistakel b'kankan, ele b'ma sh'yesh bo.

"Don't look at the container, but at what is in it."

This Hebrew maxim, taken from a collection of ethical teachings known as *Pirkei Avot* (*Ethics of the Ancestors*) 4:27, would serve the neighbors in this story well. To those who see Sadie Rose as weak, sage Mrs. Mindel rightly points out that there are "all kinds of strong." It is human nature to judge quickly or jump to conclusions sometimes, but Judaism teaches us to look beyond the superficial and find each person's strengths and positive qualities. They are always there!

Sadie, her family, and friends miss their "shul (synagogue) in the old country." They were part of the major wave of Jewish immigration to the United States between 1880 and 1924. Many Jewish immigrants arrived at Ellis Island and stayed on the Lower East Side of New York City, but many others took different routes. During this time, numerous German Jews moved to small cities and towns throughout the Midwest, West, and South. Many Eastern European Jews brought farming skills to rural areas throughout the Northeast.

The bond between Sadie and Mrs. Mindel is special. Sadie won't rest until she has helped her dear friend recover from the pervasive sadness she feels after her home burns down. Sadie instinctively understands *kol Yisrael arevim ze la-ze*: "All Jews are responsible for each other"—a teaching well worth extending to the larger community.



JEWISH BEDTIME STORIES and SONGS

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JEWISH BEDTIME STORIES and SONGS



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**In memory of Deborah Brodie,
my friend and teacher**

—S.R.B.

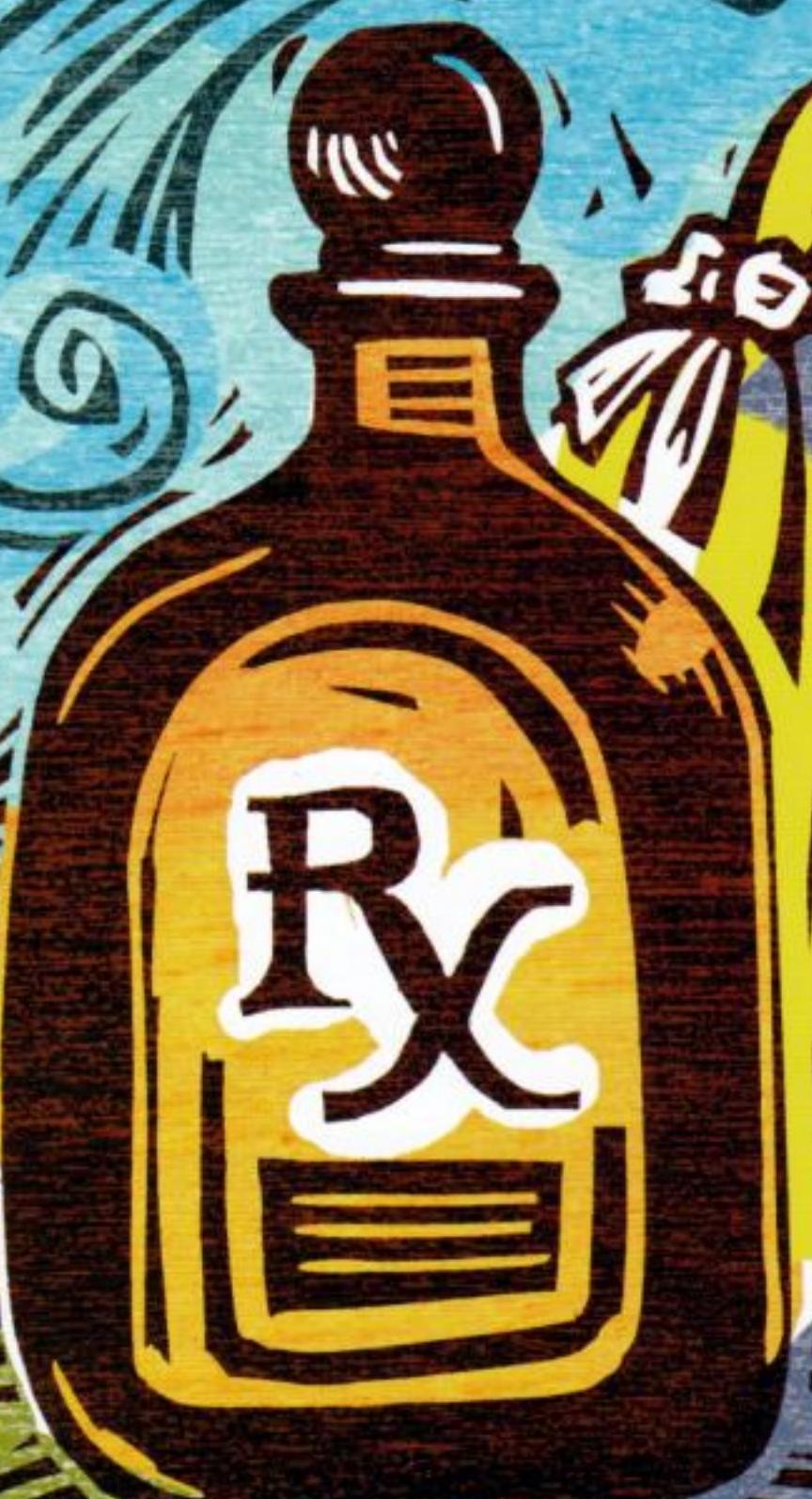
For Mom and Dad

—K.W.





Sadie Rose lived on a farm with her
mama and papa, four big brothers, one
hundred chickens, twenty milk cows, two
brown horses, and one barn cat.



Sadie Rose was small and thin and often sickly. Every day, her mama gave her a spoonful of tonic to help her grow, and then Sadie Rose would go collect the chickens' eggs. "I wish I were strong," she told the chickens, but they just squawked and waited for the corn Sadie Rose always brought them.



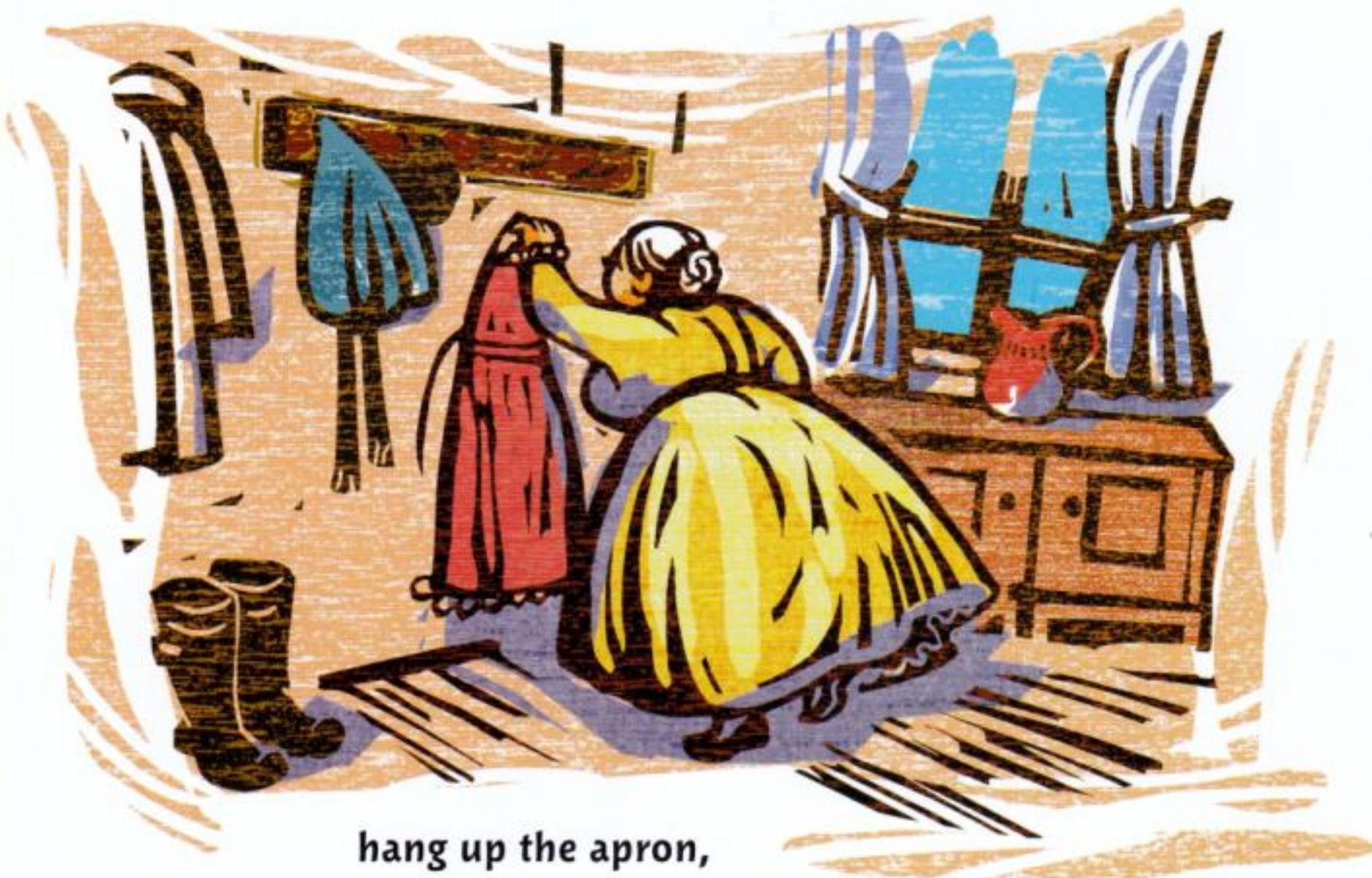
Across the road from Sadie Rose lived an old woman in a little house. Mrs. Mindel was small and round and often forgetful. Sadie Rose made up a poem to help Mrs. Mindel remember her chores.



"Wipe the table,



sweep the floor,



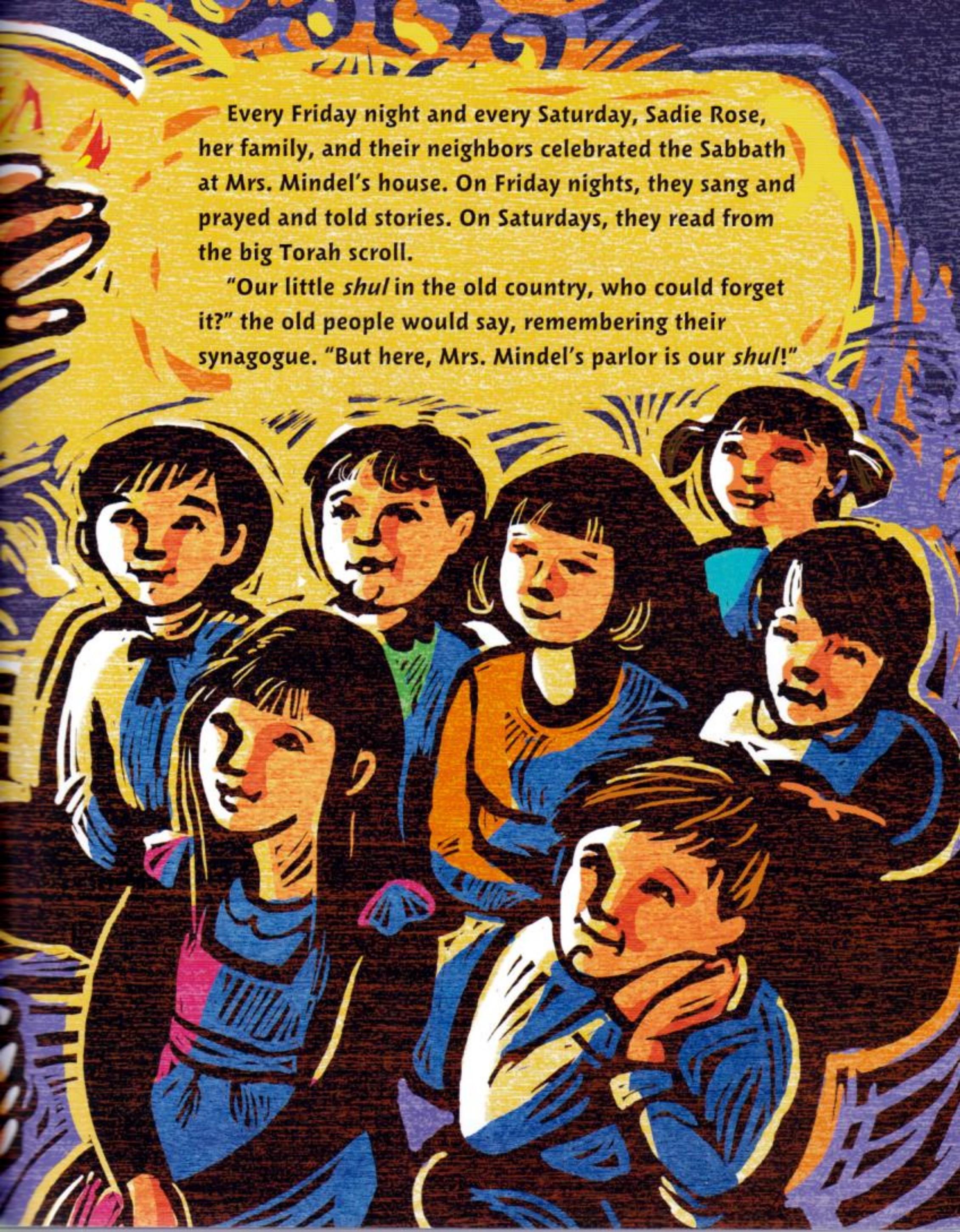
hang up the apron,

close the oven door."



Sometimes Mrs. Mindel still forgot things, but she would just clop herself on the head and say, "So many holes in this old *kop*!" Then she sang herself songs from the old country.





Every Friday night and every Saturday, Sadie Rose, her family, and their neighbors celebrated the Sabbath at Mrs. Mindel's house. On Friday nights, they sang and prayed and told stories. On Saturdays, they read from the big Torah scroll.

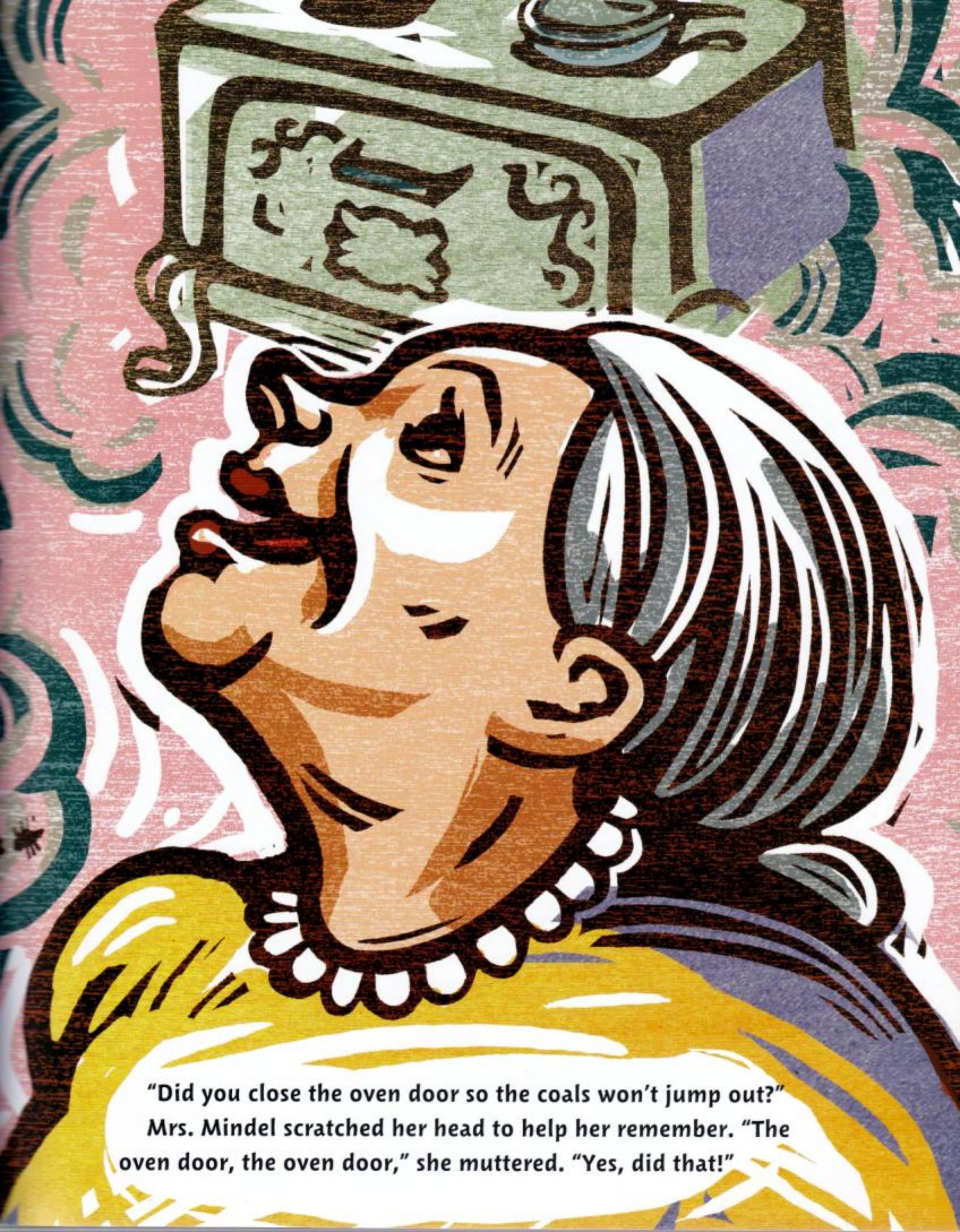
"Our little *shul* in the old country, who could forget it?" the old people would say, remembering their synagogue. "But here, Mrs. Mindel's parlor is our *shul*!"

One summer morning, Sadie Rose helped Mrs. Mindel hitch the horses to the wagon. "Mrs. Mindel, did you latch your back door so no animals will get in?" asked Sadie Rose.

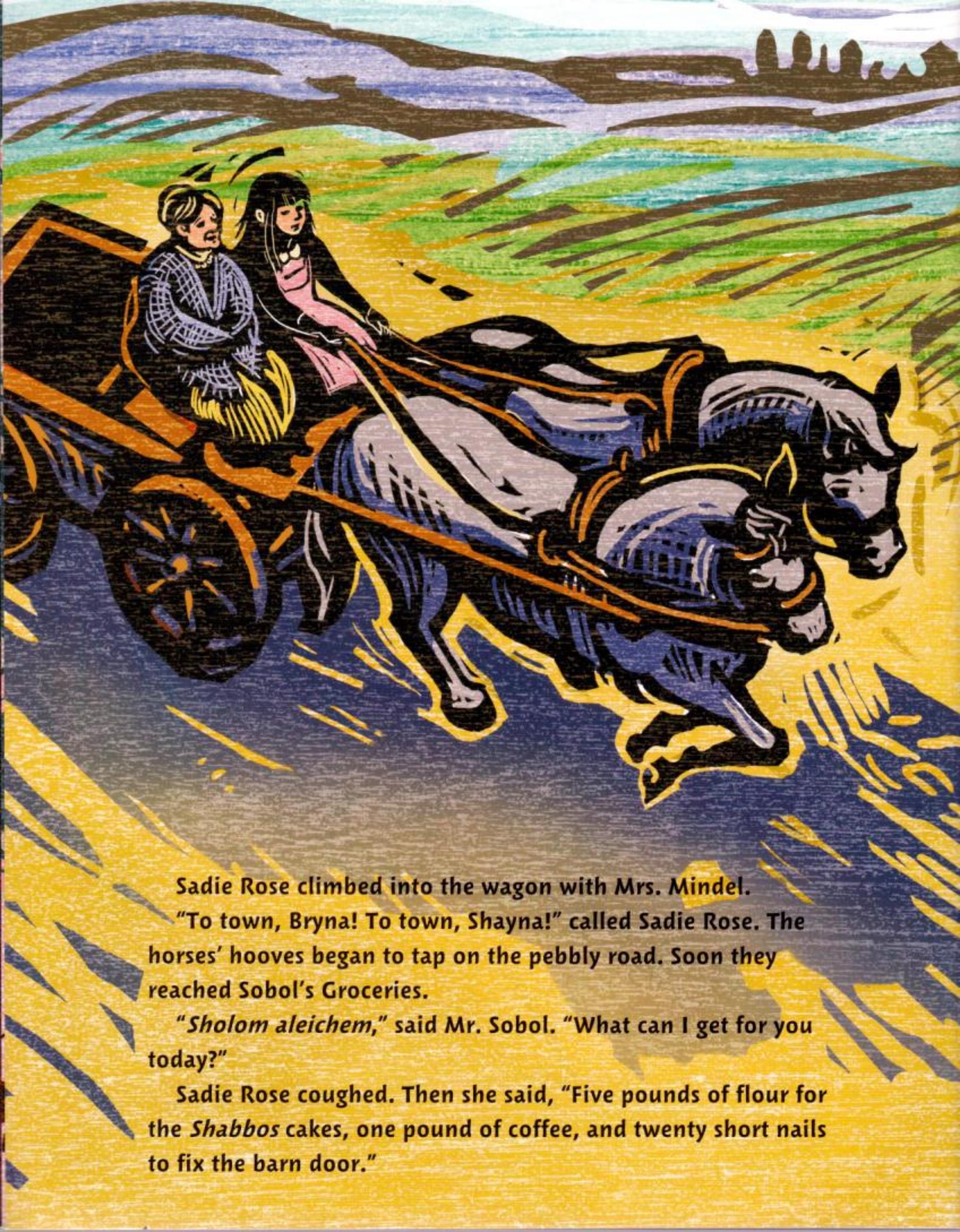


"Oh yes, did that!" said Mrs. Mindel.
"Did you put the rolls in the bread box so the ants won't eat them?"
"Yes indeed, did that!"





"Did you close the oven door so the coals won't jump out?"
Mrs. Mindel scratched her head to help her remember. "The
oven door, the oven door," she muttered. "Yes, did that!"



Sadie Rose climbed into the wagon with Mrs. Mindel.

"To town, Bryna! To town, Shayna!" called Sadie Rose. The horses' hooves began to tap on the pebbly road. Soon they reached Sobol's Groceries.

"*Sholom aleichem,*" said Mr. Sobol. "What can I get for you today?"

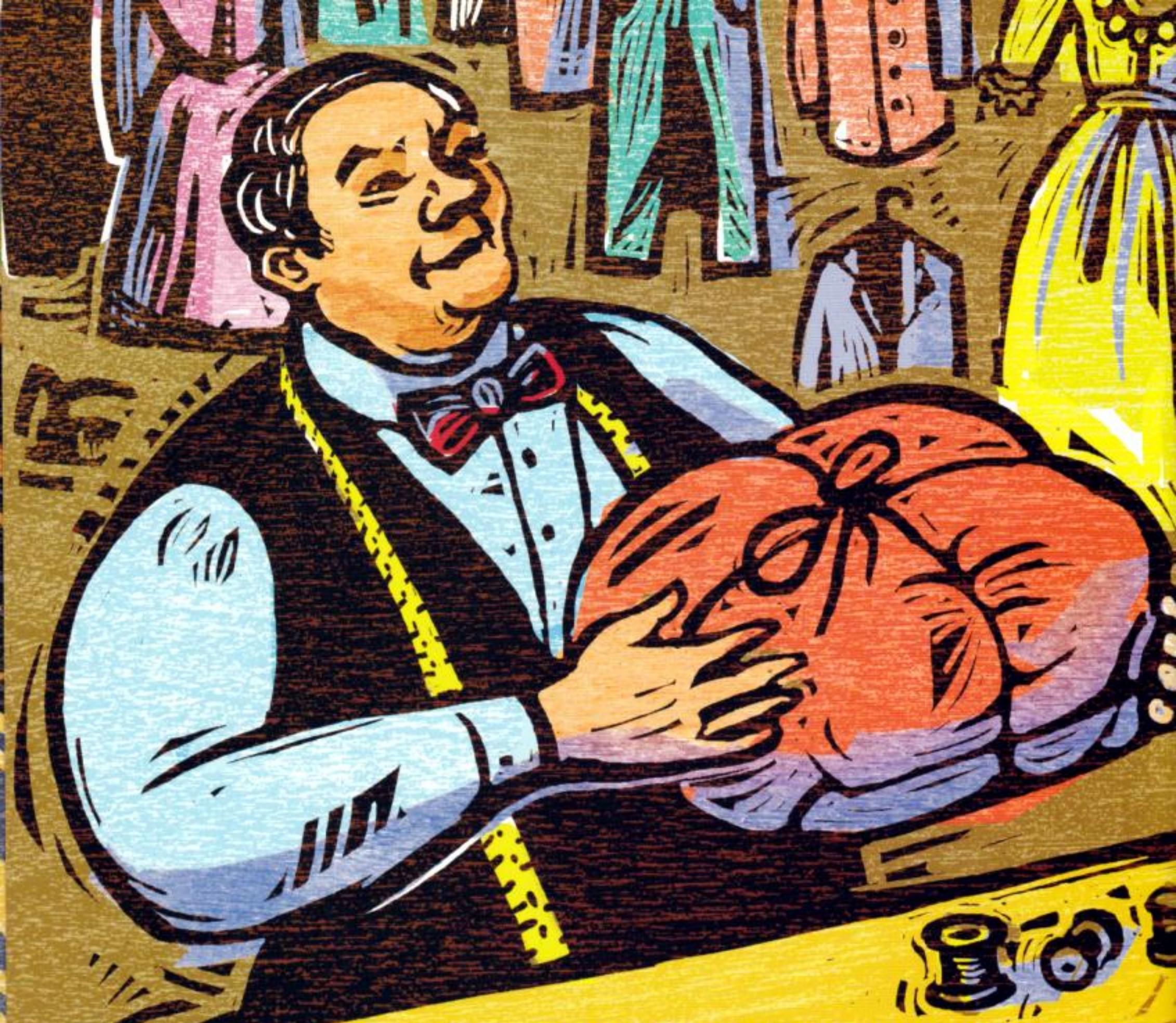
Sadie Rose coughed. Then she said, "Five pounds of flour for the *Shabbos* cakes, one pound of coffee, and twenty short nails to fix the barn door."



"Coming right up," said Mr. Sobol. Then he whispered to Mrs. Mindel, "I'm worried about our Sadie Rose. She's short for six, no? Maybe she's not strong enough for farm life."

Sadie Rose looked up. "I am *eight* years old," she said softly.

"Sam Sobol, I am surprised at you," said Mrs. Mindel loudly. "I thought you knew there's all kinds of strong. Our Sadie Rose, she never forgets a thing. Checks the chicken coops every night so the foxes won't get in. Such a memory that one's got. Give her time; her legs and arms will be strong, too."



Sadie Rose and Mrs. Mindel climbed back into the wagon and drove around the corner to the tailor's shop.

"*Sholom aleichem,*" said Mr. Kaufman. "What can I do for you today?"

Sadie Rose coughed. "My papa wants to know if you patched his winter coat," she said.

"Got it all ready for you," answered Mr. Kaufman. Then he whispered to Mrs. Mindel, "I'm worried about our Sadie Rose. Isn't she a little thin for seven? She needs to fatten up, fit in her dress better."

ZOLIAT



Sadie Rose turned around. "I am *eight* years old," she said clearly.

"Saul Kaufman, I am surprised at you," said Mrs. Mindel. "I thought you knew there's all kinds of strong. Our Sadie Rose, she notices if even the scraggly barn cat's not well. Just last week she took out a stone that got stuck in his paw. Give her time; she'll fill out that dress like she fills up that cat's heart."



Down the block they went to the shoemaker's store.
"Sholom aleichem," Mr. Stein said. "What can I do for you?"
Sadie Rose coughed. "We're here to pick up my brother's
boots."

Mr. Stein waved two black boots over his head.
"These?" he asked. Sadie Rose nodded.
Then Mr. Stein whispered, "Mrs. Mindel, I'm worried about
our Sadie Rose. Coughing, coughing, ever since she was little;
and now here she is, six years old and still coughing."



Sadie Rose peered around Mrs. Mindel. "I am *eight* years old," she said firmly.

"Jacob Stein, I am surprised at you," said Mrs. Mindel. "I thought you knew there's all kinds of strong. Our Sadie Rose always comes up with a new idea when you need one. Just yesterday her papa said he needed a milk wagon for his deliveries, but he couldn't figure how to pay for it. So Sadie Rose said, 'Why not buy one with the neighbors and share it?' Give her some time, her lungs will be strong like her mind."



The horses' hooves tapped on the pebbly road out of town. Close to home, Bryna and Shayna stopped. They pawed the road and threw back their heads.

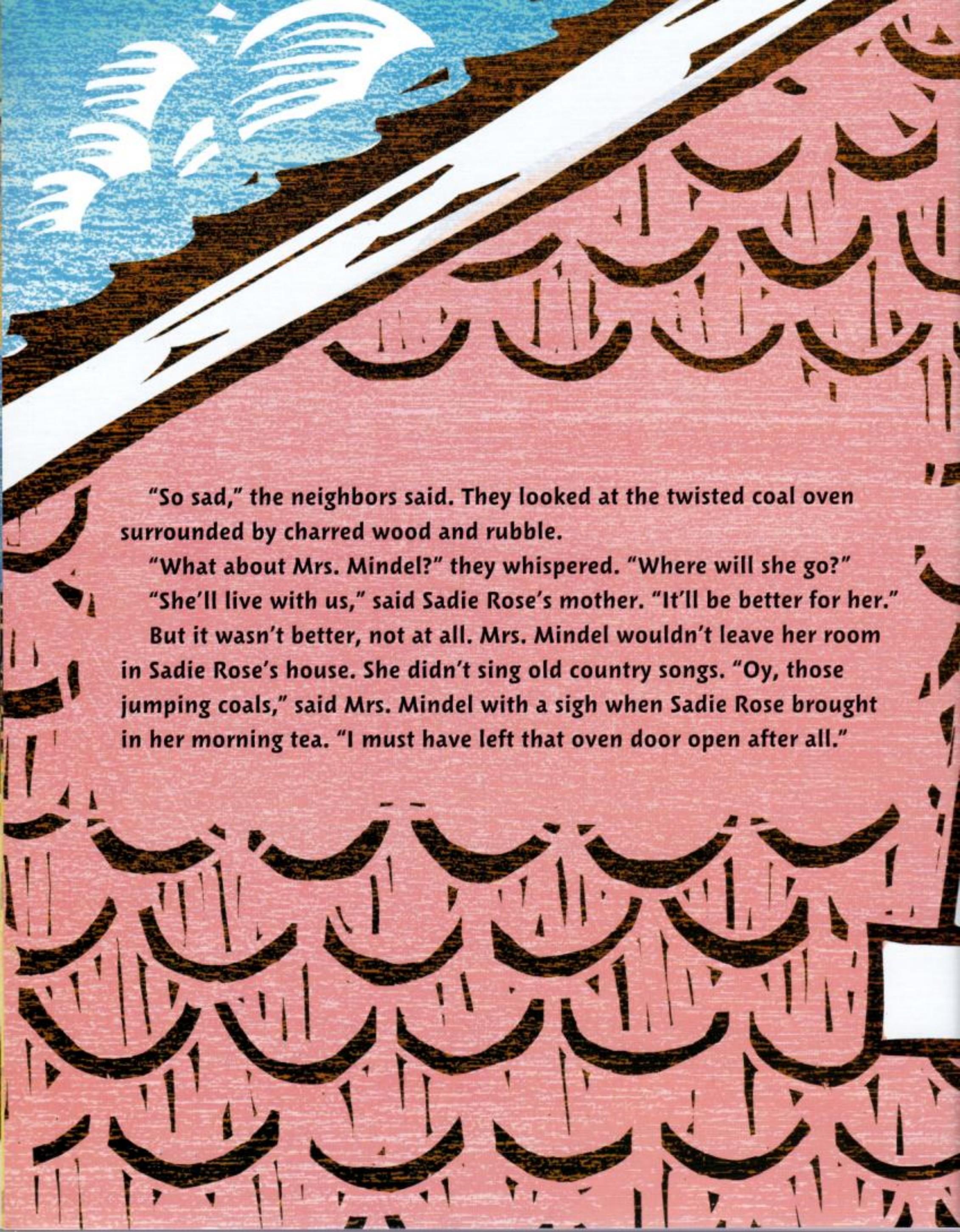
Sadie Rose looked down the road toward Mrs. Mindel's farmhouse. Flames shot from the roof! Smoke swirled from the windows toward the wagon! Sadie Rose grabbed Mrs. Mindel's arm.

"The house!" she cried.



"The oven door!" gasped Mrs. Mindel.

Sadie Rose saw her four big brothers throwing buckets of water at the burning house. But as soon as one flame went out, new ones sprang up. Suddenly, her papa raced out the front door clutching the Torah scroll. Just after he reached the path—*crash!* The roof fell in. The porch split in two. Mrs. Mindel's house was gone.



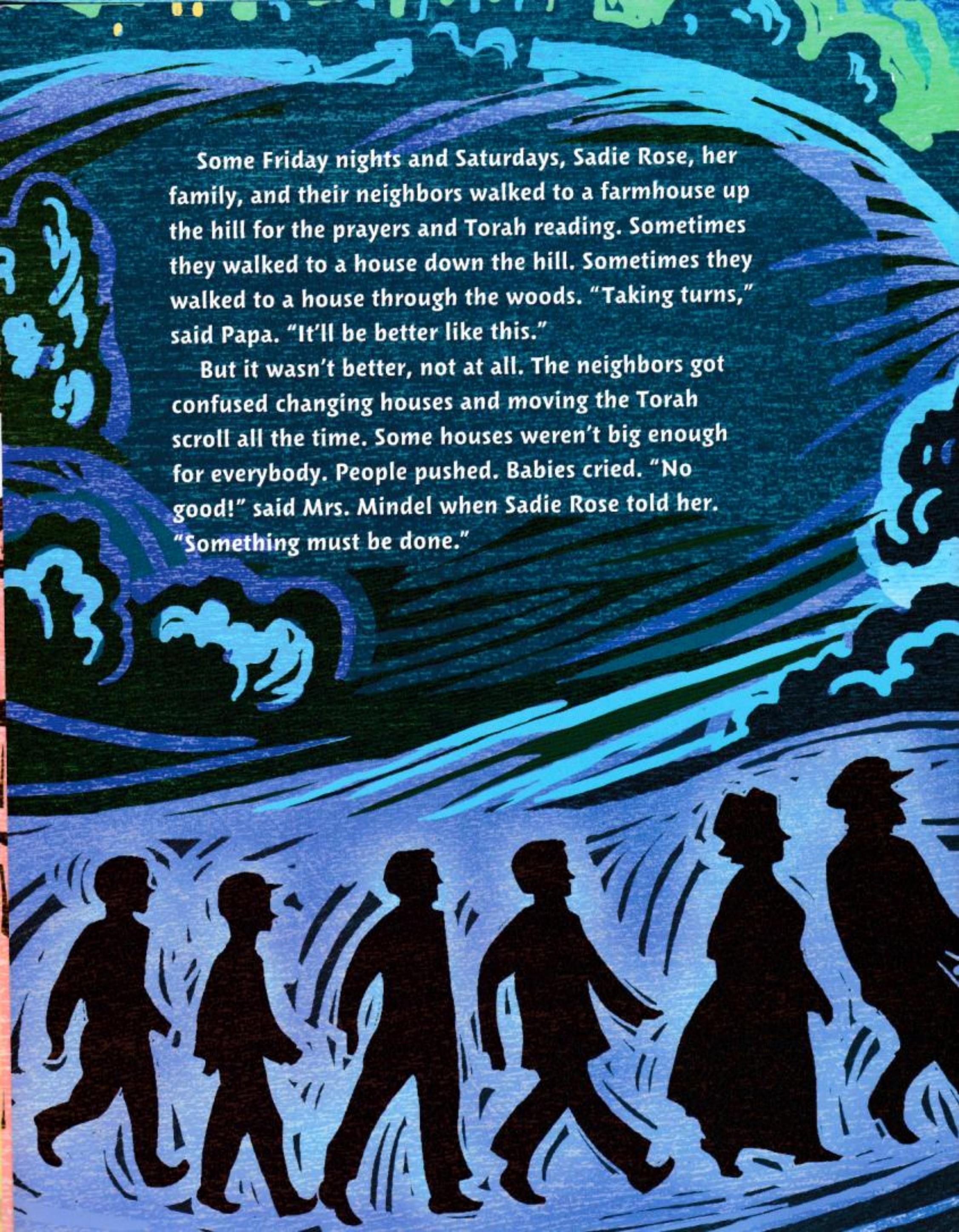
"So sad," the neighbors said. They looked at the twisted coal oven surrounded by charred wood and rubble.

"What about Mrs. Mindel?" they whispered. "Where will she go?"

"She'll live with us," said Sadie Rose's mother. "It'll be better for her."

But it wasn't better, not at all. Mrs. Mindel wouldn't leave her room in Sadie Rose's house. She didn't sing old country songs. "Oy, those jumping coals," said Mrs. Mindel with a sigh when Sadie Rose brought in her morning tea. "I must have left that oven door open after all."





Some Friday nights and Saturdays, Sadie Rose, her family, and their neighbors walked to a farmhouse up the hill for the prayers and Torah reading. Sometimes they walked to a house down the hill. Sometimes they walked to a house through the woods. "Taking turns," said Papa. "It'll be better like this."

But it wasn't better, not at all. The neighbors got confused changing houses and moving the Torah scroll all the time. Some houses weren't big enough for everybody. People pushed. Babies cried. "No good!" said Mrs. Mindel when Sadie Rose told her. "Something must be done."



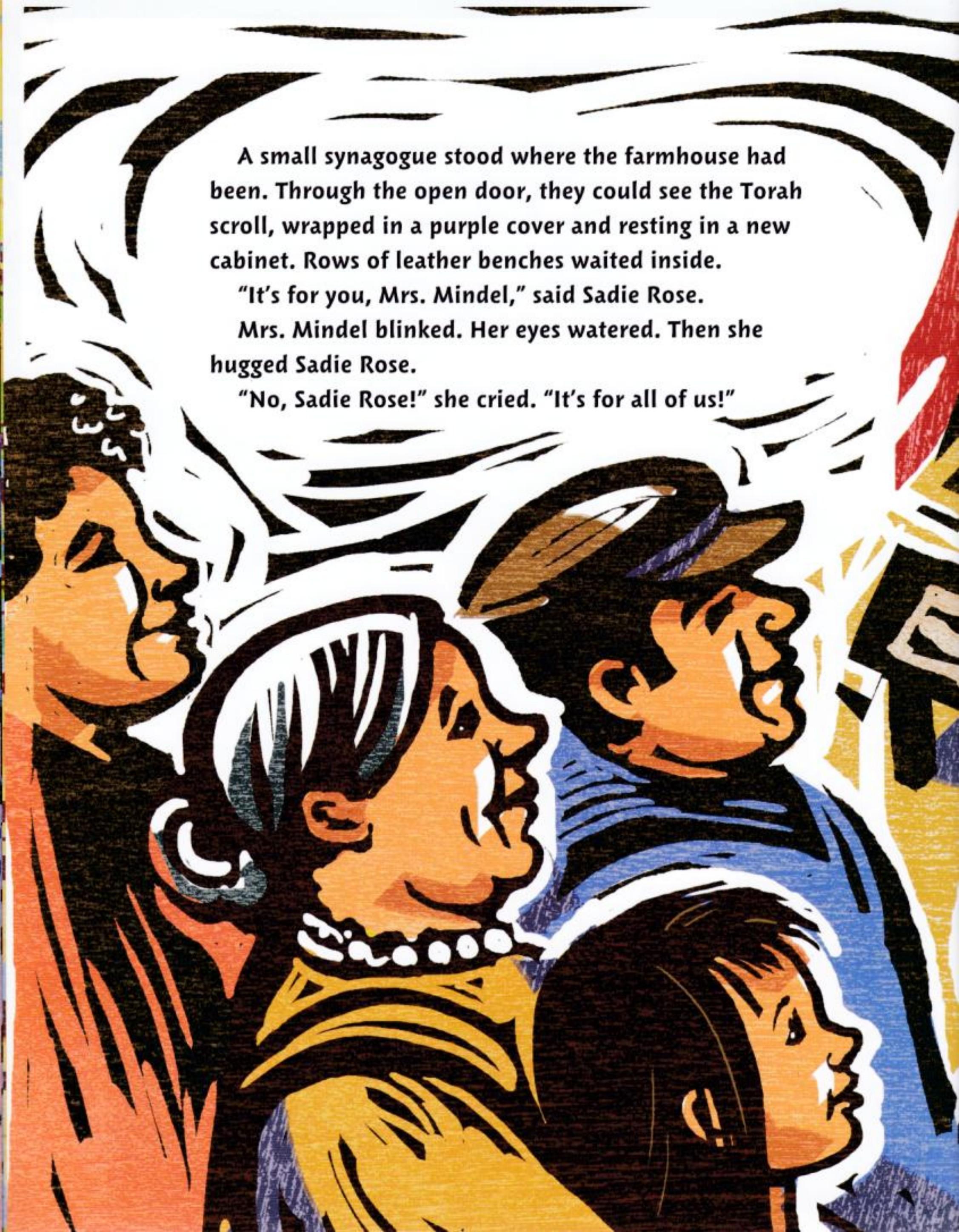




One morning, Sadie Rose had an idea. It was a very good idea, but Sadie Rose knew she couldn't do it alone. She went to her family and explained. Then Sadie Rose and her brothers hitched the horses to the wagon and drove to town.

The grocer, the tailor, the shoemaker, and all the neighbors liked Sadie Rose's idea. Everybody came to help. It took them all week, but by Friday afternoon, as the sun sank low in the sky, they were ready to show Mrs. Mindel.

"Please come with me, Mrs. Mindel," said Sadie Rose. "Please. I need to show you something before *Shabbos*." Sadie Rose held out her hand, and to her surprise, Mrs. Mindel took it.



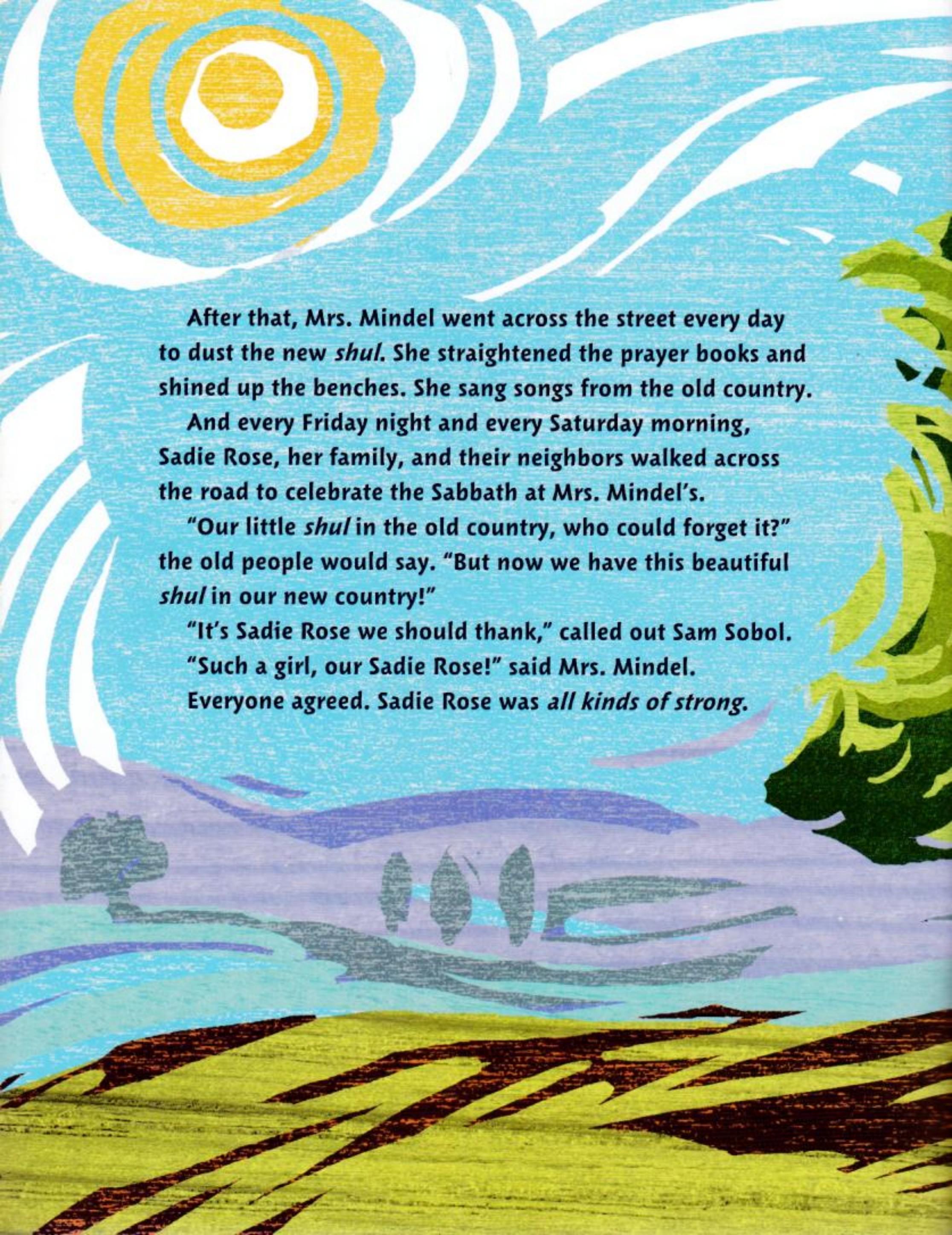
A small synagogue stood where the farmhouse had been. Through the open door, they could see the Torah scroll, wrapped in a purple cover and resting in a new cabinet. Rows of leather benches waited inside.

"It's for you, Mrs. Mindel," said Sadie Rose.

Mrs. Mindel blinked. Her eyes watered. Then she hugged Sadie Rose.

"No, Sadie Rose!" she cried. "It's for all of us!"





After that, Mrs. Mindel went across the street every day to dust the new *shul*. She straightened the prayer books and shined up the benches. She sang songs from the old country.

And every Friday night and every Saturday morning, Sadie Rose, her family, and their neighbors walked across the road to celebrate the Sabbath at Mrs. Mindel's.

"Our little *shul* in the old country, who could forget it?" the old people would say. "But now we have this beautiful *shul* in our new country!"

"It's Sadie Rose we should thank," called out Sam Sobol. "Such a girl, our Sadie Rose!" said Mrs. Mindel. Everyone agreed. Sadie Rose was *all kinds of strong*.



About This Book

During the eleven years I lived in West Hartford, Connecticut, I was lucky to get to know many people who had grown up—or whose parents and grandparents had grown up—on Jewish-owned chicken and dairy farms in the eastern part of the state. I was surprised to learn about these farmers; all the Jewish immigrants I knew had lived in New York or other big cities. Like Mrs. Mindel, these Jewish farmers came from Russia and Eastern Europe (the “old country”). They spoke Yiddish, a colorful language related to German but written in Hebrew characters, and maintained their religious customs, such as *Shabbos* (Sabbath) observance.

—S.R.B.

Glossary

Kop (kohp)—the Yiddish word for head

Shabbos (SHA-bos)—the Yiddish word for the Jewish Sabbath, a day of rest, prayer, singing, storytelling, and delicious foods. *Shabbos* begins at sundown on Friday with the lighting of candles and lasts for twenty-five hours, until three stars appear in the sky on Saturday night. In the present day, both the word *Shabbos* and the Hebrew equivalent *Shabbat* (sha-BAT) are used to refer to the Sabbath.

Sholom aleichem (SHO-lum a-LAYKH-em)—a Yiddish greeting meaning “peace be upon you”

Shul (shool)—Yiddish for *synagogue*, a place for Jewish prayer

Torah (usually pronounced TOE-ruh by English-speaking Jews or toe-RAH by Hebrew speakers; Sadie Rose and her family would have used the Yiddish pronunciation, TOY-ruh)—the Five Books of Moses—the first, and most holy, section of the Hebrew Bible. The Torah tells stories of how the world was created and describes the beginnings of the Jewish people. It also teaches about Jewish laws and some holidays. Each week in synagogue, even today, a different section of the Torah is chanted aloud from a handwritten parchment scroll.

A Note from PJ Library® Using This Book at Home

Talk with your child about times you may have jumped to a conclusion, only to be happily surprised when taking a deeper look. Perhaps you were “judging a book by its cover,” or perhaps you met someone you didn’t initially care for, but with whom you later became good friends. Invite your child to think about times when she or he “looked at the container, not at its contents.” We all need to keep open the possibility of changing our minds—whether it involves new foods, a subject in school, or, most importantly, the people we meet.

Learn about your family’s history: talk with your child about how your family came to be where you are today. Children love interviewing relatives about the “olden days.” What kinds of jobs did the immigrant members of your family have when they came to the new country? Were they farmers, peddlers, or cobblers?

How can your family care for the community around you? Consider the following:

- ✡ Visit a home for the elderly.
- ✡ Send greetings or packages to those serving in the US military. If you’d like to reach out to Jewish soldiers, contact the Jewish Welfare Board Chaplains Council.
- ✡ Raise money at a lemonade stand and find a local cause to support with the proceeds. This is known as giving tzedakah.

About PJ Library

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